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SUBJECT: GOT NAMES MEMBERS OF THE TRUTH, JUSTICE, AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

REF: LOME 64

¶1. Summary. More than a year after the start of country-wide consultations concerning the composition and mission of a Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) for Togo, the Council of Ministers issued a decree announcing the members. In a June 16 meeting with the Ambassador, four of the members described the task at hand and issues they foresee as Togo begins to address its contentious and often violent political history. End Summary.

¶2. The mission of the TJRC is to make recommendations to bring to light acts of violence from the past of a political nature and to study methods of appeasement for the victims. The commission is responsible for organizing awareness-raising campaigns to ensure the Togolese population understands its work. It will write a report explaining the nature, the extent, and the cause of political acts of violence and should research the context that produced the violence. The TJRC should also, in the course of its work, identify the authors, institutions, organizations and others responsible for human rights violations. Finally, the commission should propose possible methods of reparation and recommend how to avoid such situations in the future.

¶3. The doubts regarding whether the TJRC will actually be able to properly carry out its assigned task have only been reinforced by the release of the names of the members of the committee. While some are respected members of Togolese society, others will probably themselves be accused of political atrocities or corruption during the process.

President- Monsignor Nicodeme Anani Barrigah-Benissan: Known for integrity

Vice-President- Professor (Ms.) Kissem Tchangai-Walla: Former minister, served as the president of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) during the 2005 presidential elections, is widely blamed for certifying fraudulent election results

First Reporter- Professor (Mr.) Koffi Ahadji-Nonou: President of the University of Lome, believed to be a friend of President Faure

Second Reporter- Mr. Bona Djato Ketewuli: President of the association "Positive Differences," former Minister of Communication

Member- Ms. Pepevi Kpakpo: Director of the Journalism Institute at the University of Lome

Member- Ms. Sirina Kourabodji: Trainer at the Islamic College of Lome

Member- Ms. Claudine Ahianyo-Kpondjo: National coordinator for the West African Network for Peacebuilding

Member- Mr. El Hadj Imam Kassim Mensah: Member of the Islamic Union of Togo, teacher

Member- Mr. Togbui Agboli Agokoli VI: Tribal chief of Notse, a town located an hour north of Lome

Member- Mr. Ogamo Bagna- Businessman, former minister

Member- Professor Koffi Badjow Tcham (Mr.): History professor at the University of Lome

¶4. Ambassador Hawkins met with several members of the commission, including the president and vice-president, on June 16. They stated that the main goal of the commission is to reconcile the various factions of Togolese society.

Barrigah-Benissan noted that Togolese have different perceptions of history, and it is the commission's job to examine the facts to bring the country to resolution. He said that the commission will remain in the preparatory phase for weeks to come. The commission plans to consult with specialists from other countries which have already gone through the same process.

¶5. The Togolese League of Human Rights (LTDH), a respected local human rights organization, expressed concern about the composition of the commission. While TJRC members told the Ambassador that President Faure held numerous consultations to decide who would be appointed to the commission, the LTDH feels that inclusion of several members was to advantage the GOT. In a letter sent to the Minister of Human Rights, LTDH interim-president Kpande-Adzare notes that Ms. Tchangai-Walla was the president of the CENI when the results of the 2005 elections were contested by everyone. Mr. Bagna, a former Minister of the Interior and former director general of the Togolese national phosphate company, is suspected of embezzling funds from that company and supposedly had fallen out of favor with Eyadema before his death. Finally, Mr. Agokoli is mentioned as simply not being "politically innocent." Kpande-Adzare feels that the inclusion of these members throws into doubt the political will of the GOT to address past contentious issues.

¶6. Comment. The members of the new TJRC are by and large well-respected figures in Togolese society. However, the inclusion of several controversial members, especially Tchangai-Walla, calls into doubt the neutrality of any recommendations the commission might make. Her role in the 2005 presidential elections is well-known by the population, and it seems strange that President Faure would appoint someone to the commission who will more than likely herself be accused of being part of the problem. As the TJRC members finish their training and start to set their internal rules for deliberation, it will be interesting to see if they actually concentrate on addressing the grievances of the Togolese population or if they just continue to sweep the issues under the rug and attempt to rewrite history. End Comment.

HAWKINS